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RELEASE
NEWS

THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION / EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMBASSADOR HARNISH TO SWEAR-IN AZERBAIJAN'S FIRST PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS IN SUMGAYIT

Baku, December 11, 2003

The U.S. Embassy is pleased to announce that the first group of Peace Corps volunteers in Azerbaijan will be officially sworn-in tomorrow by Ambassador Reno Harnish. The ceremony will take place at the Chemical Palace in Sumgayit, located at 20 Hassan Aliyev Street (formerly Inqilab Street) at 10am, on December 12. In addition to remarks by Ambassador Harnish, Peace Corps Director William Levine and Deputy Minister of Education Elmar Gasimov will also address the volunteers, and several volunteers will speak about their upcoming activities in Azerbaijan. A reception will follow the formal portion of the program.

The 26 Peace Corps volunteers will be placed at various secondary schools and university teacher training institutes throughout Azerbaijan, where they will teach English and develop teacher training programs. The volunteers will work in Ganja, Mingachavir, Sheki, Oguz, Shamaka, Ismayili, Gabalah, Vandam, Lenkoran, Masali, Jalalibad, Bilasavar, Saliyyahn and Neftchila, and will live with Azerbaijani host families.

"We're truly excited about the good work that Peace Corps is beginning in Azerbaijan," stated Ambassador Harnish. "The volunteers will provide much-needed English language training for the Azerbaijani people, and by being involved in their local communities, will also help to promote better understanding between our two peoples."

The Peace Corps traces its roots and mission to 1960, when then-Senator John F. Kennedy challenged students at the University of Michigan to serve their country in the cause of peace by living and working in developing countries. From that inspiration grew an agency of the U.S. government devoted to world peace and friendship. Since that time, more than 170,000 Peace Corps volunteers have been invited by 136 host countries to work on issues ranging from AIDS education, information technology, and environmental preservation.

For more information about Peace Corps activities in Azerbaijan, contact Peace Corps Program and Training Officer Steven Zadrow at 991720/21.